CRAWFISH, Y’ALL

Mudbug-loving Texans pull up a seat at the communal table
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Crawfish and good times at Repka’s in Brookshire.

FEAUREs

8 Crape Murder  As healthy trees are hacked in the prime of their lives, an expert pleads: “Stop the madness!” Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers | Illustration by Michael Koelsch

10 A Tale of Texas Crawfish  Tasty crustaceans create a feasting frenzy every spring. Story and photos by Eric W. Pohl

NEXT MONTH

Soul Music of South Texas  Conjunto coaxes a unique sound and subculture from accordions and 12-string guitars.

ON THE COVER  For many Texans, a crawfish boil marks more than the arrival of spring. Photo by Eric W. Pohl

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I have been making soap for over 25 years in Texas! . . . My husband and I raise dairy goats. From our award-winning Nubian dairy goats, we make soap for our customers and for gifts. We always love sharing our passion with others. chopped grass and hay, or earthy notes, like jasmine or patchouli, can be added to create unique scents.

I use essential oils to enhance the fragrance of my soap. Lavender oil, for example, is known for its calming properties and has a soothing aroma that can help reduce stress and anxiety. Other popular essential oils include eucalyptus, peppermint, and lemongrass, each offering its own therapeutic benefits.

Many soap artisans also incorporate herbs, flowers, and other natural ingredients into their creations. These can include dried calendula petals, rose petals, or chamomile flowers, which not only add lovely colors and fragrances but also provide potential skin-healthy benefits. Some soap makers even go a step further by adding natural rock salt or dead sea salt, which can further hydrate and nourish the skin.

In conclusion, soap-making is a delightful and versatile craft. It allows one to create personalized products that can be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Whether you’re just starting out or are an experienced soap enthusiast, there’s always something new to discover and learn in the world of soap-making.
Chopin and Friends

Classical music lovers are in for a treat when distinguished Canadian pianist Ryo Yanagitani performs **CHOPIN AND FRIENDS: ROMANTIC GENIUS** at the Cailloux Theater in **KERRVILLE** on **FEBRUARY 27**.

Frédéric Chopin was a 19th-century Polish composer and virtuoso pianist who was close friends with French composer Hector Berlioz and sometimes friend, sometimes rival of Franz Liszt. The concert will feature pieces by all three and one by Johann Sebastian Bach, one of Chopin’s greatest influences.

“This concert is all about showmanship,” says Eugene Dowdy, conductor and artistic director for Symphony of the Hills, host of the event. “Ryo is a wonderful showman as a performer, super energetic. And even Chopin, himself a famous piano performer, also hung out with other showy composers like Hector Berlioz—composer of a piece named *Symphony Fantastique*, by the way. Who writes a symphony and names it that?”

INFO ► (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org
“There is no history about which there is so much ignorance as this great movement for the establishment of equal political rights for women. I hope the twentieth century will see the triumph of our cause.”

—SUSAN B. ANTHONY, in a letter to the editor of the Chicago Tribune, December 20, 1900. Anthony was born 200 years ago, February 15, 1820.

Desolate Skies

The New York Times, reporting on an analysis in the journal Science, said in September that there are 2.9 billion fewer birds in the United States and Canada than there were in 1970.

While the study was not designed to determine the cause of the 29% drop in population, scientists suggest likely culprits are habitat loss and pesticides.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My most unforgettable first date was . . .

Last month we asked readers to finish a sentence that we started. Your snappy answers are still coming in, and we’ll share them next month. Meanwhile, amid thoughts of romance and Valentine’s Day, how would you finish the sentence above?

Your answers can be silly, serious, deep or superficial. Post your responses on our Facebook page or email them to letters@TexasCoopPower.com. Please include your name, city and co-op.

BY THE NUMBERS

5,200

That’s the number of choking deaths in the U.S. in 2017, according to the National Safety Council. Surgeon Henry Heimlich, who in the 1970s invented a technique used to help choking victims dislodge an obstruction from their airways, was born 100 years ago—February 3, 1920, in Delaware. The Heimlich maneuver is credited with saving thousands of lives.

Did you know?

In 2016, at the age of 96, Heimlich himself used his technique for the first time to save the life of a woman choking at his retirement home in Cincinnati.
EVERY FEBRUARY, horticulturist Greg Grant dreads the sight of tree trunks topped by sawed-off limbs. The annual chain saw massacre generally targets only one kind of tree: crape myrtles. “I’m never going to get used to that horrifically wrong way of pruning them,” huffs Grant, a Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension agent for Smith County. “Someone’s got to stop the madness.”

That madness is known as “crape murder.” No one’s sure how or why the excessive shearing got started, though Grant, a member of Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative, has some theories. Despite efforts to counter it, the crime against nature continues.

Crape myrtles have long been loved in the South as ornamental shrubs and trees for their peeling bark, prolific blooms and colorful fall foliage. Their tolerance of hot, dry climates makes them especially suited for Texas landscapes.

AS HEALTHY TREES are hacked in the prime of their lives, an expert pleads: “STOP THE MADNESS!”

In part, their name refers to the flowers’ crinkly crepe paper appearance. However, crape myrtles, which are native to India and southeast Asia, are not true myrtle trees, which bear white, star-shaped flowers. Instead, crape myrtle blooms—which range from white to pink, red and lavender—look more like lilacs, hence its nickname, “Lilac of the South.” Today, more than 110 crape myrtle varieties range in size from 3 feet tall to more than 30 feet.

Their earliest cultivation traces back to the Chinese gardens of the Tang dynasty, which ruled from 618 to 907 A.D. In 1786, French botanist André Michaux planted crape myrtles in his gardens in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1799, the ship George Berkeley ferried plants and seeds from India, including crape myrtles, to George Washington for his Mount Vernon plantation in Virginia. Thomas Jefferson also planted them at Monticello, his home in Virginia. The tree’s popularity spread across the South.

Marilda Maxey, wife of Confederate Gen. Samuel Bell Maxey, is believed to have brought the first crape myrtles to Texas in 1857, when the couple moved from Kentucky to Lamar County.

A decade later, she tended a formal garden, which showcased crape myrtles, at their new Italian villa-style home in Paris, Texas, now the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site. Paris residents planted crape myrtles after fire destroyed almost half the town in 1916. They planted more for the state’s centennial, in 1936.

In 1997, the 75th Texas Legislature declared the crape myrtle as the official state shrub. (Texas purple sage was deemed the official state native shrub in 2005.) It also designated Paris as the state’s official Crape Myrtle City and Lamar County as Crape Myrtle County Capital. Not to leave anyone out, the Legislature also named Waxahachie as the Crape Myrtle Capital of Texas and Brazos County as an official Crape Myrtle County. McKinney, billed as America’s Crape Myrtle City, boasts some 65,000 crape myrtles across the city and in its 7-acre World Collection Park.

Despite its official standing, not even Paris is immune to crape murder. “It’s an ongoing issue here,” sighs Billie Paskin, former president of the Lamar County Master Gardeners and a Lamar Electric member. “We talk to people, and they still cut
off their crape myrtles.”

Likewise, Grant—who’s introduced 49 plants, including two crape myrtle hybrids, to the nursery trade—regularly writes about the foibles of crape murder. “I’m not the crape myrtle police,” Grant says. “People can do whatever they want with their trees. But it’s the No. 1 horticultural phenomenon that you see, and there’s not a single word in any horticultural publication that condones the practice.”

Grant theorizes that the severe style of pruning originated in Europe, where upper branches of some trees were pollarded—cut back to the trunk—to provide fuel. “Perhaps the practice came with the Spanish, who brought it with them to Mexico,” he says. “From Mexico, it spread across the South.”

These days, motives for crape murder vary, depending on who’s wielding the saw. “Homeowners tell me they cut off their crape myrtles because they’re too tall,” Grant says. “So it’s important that people know what size crape myrtle they want and then buy the right one for the site. Don’t plant one that can grow 30 feet high under a utility line.”

Crape murder disfigures the shrubs, spurs growth of more suckers (new shoots) at a tree’s base and decreases a tree’s cold hardiness. Grant also suspects that pruning wounds and new growth attract crape myrtle bark scale, an introduced pest that’s spread across most of the Southeast. Sooty black mold and white, feltlike encrustations on higher limbs indicate a likely infestation. Though not a death sentence, the scale can turn healthy trees into eyesores and reduce their vigor by about one-third.

Bottom line: Crape murder costs money, wastes time and adds debris to landfills. It’s dangerous, too—chain saws and ladders don’t mix. Left alone, crape myrtles grow into graceful sculptures worthy of admiration.

“The only pruning they need is removal of dead wood, branches that cross and suckers from the base,” Grant says. “The prettiest ones I’ve seen have never been touched. And I mean never.”

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers of Blanco blogs about her gardening adventures at sherylsmithrodgers.blogspot.com.
A TALE OF TEXAS CRAWFISH
A crawfish boil encourages friends and family to dig in and eat from a shared plate or right off the table.

TASTY CRUSTACEANS CREATE A FEASTING FRENZY EVERY SPRING

CRAWFISH. CRAWDADS. MUDBUGS. Whatever you call them, they swim at the heart of a Southern tradition that’s as much about eating the tasty freshwater crustaceans in a messy jubilee of divine spiciness as it is about bringing friends, family—and even strangers—together.

From out-of-the-way eateries and exuberant festivals to backyard shindigs and community celebrations, mudbug-loving Texans happily pull up a seat at a communal table and peel tails. Steam and aromatic spices fill the air as piping hot, bright-red crawfish tumble from giant pots onto paper-covered tables.

Then it’s on! Time to twist off the tails and pull out the sweet, tender lobsterlike tail meat. The more adventurous devourers, keeping with time-honored crawfish tradition, suck the rich, flavorful yellow “fat” (it’s actually a digestive organ called the hepatopancreas) from the head. Aficionados insist this is the best part.

Crawfish season varies depending on whom you ask, but it is usually in full swing by the start of Lent in late February, with the peak for size and quality covering March, April and May. Seasonal specialty restaurants like the Crawfish Shack in Crosby attract crawfish-crazed patrons by the dozens.

“The first day we open up for the year, we’ll have 60 cars in line just to get to-go food,” says owner Dan Meaux. “Some people are waiting two hours.” The Crawfish Shack has erupted in popularity in the past few years, making it one of the top crawfish spots in the country.

“As of the last two years, we cook more crawfish than anyone in the country,” Meaux says. He credits the explosive growth to the backyard party atmosphere and never compromising on quality.

Mudbug-themed festivals feature live music, parades, pageants, carnival rides and literal tons of crawfish. In 2017, Guinness World Records recognized the Bigass Crawfish Bash in La Marque for the most crawfish prepared in eight hours: more than 58,000 pounds.

Across Texas, every crawfish chef and backyard boiler has a CONTINUED ON PAGE 14
BROOKSHIRE
REPKA’S GROCERY
What started as a 1940s icehouse and convenience store, Repka’s, a member of San Bernard Electric Cooperative, serves Cajun-style cuisine year-round. If you blink, you’ll miss the nondescript building even though it is packed during crawfish season. Wood-paneled walls boast bar swag and autographed headshots of famous diners, including country music star Tim McGraw. Pool tables, vintage arcade games and a jukebox add to the dive bar vibe, and patron-inscribed dollar bills adorn the ceiling. Plan on trying fried gator, crawfish étouffée and homemade pork cracklings.

CROSBY
CRAWFISH SHACK
One could argue the Crawfish Shack is Texas’ most popular BYOB boiling pot restaurant. During peak season, loyal patrons lug beer-filled coolers and happily endure 200-person lines to get their hands on Dan Meaux’s savory mudbugs. During the season (typically January–June), the Crawfish Shack serves more than 6,000 pounds of crawfish daily. The open-air, red steel building exudes a garage-party-meets-sports-bar energy characterized by football memorabilia on the walls and sports on big-screen TVs. Get ready for boiled crawfish, shrimp, snow crab and sausage with corn, potatoes and mushrooms.

EL CAMPO
PINCHERS BOIL’N POT RESTAURANT
With lakeside dining on a large deck and fresh-daily crawfish from their farm, Pinchers is a cut above your average crawfish shack. Just off U.S. Highway 59 South, the restaurant’s conspicuous yellow facade and

THE TAIL TRAIL: WHERE TO FIND
THE BEST CRAWFISH
sparkling blue lake beckon passersby to a trifecta eatery, fuel station and RV park. Visitors are greeted by a life-size shark and a large sign inviting them to “EAT TAIL.” The novelty lake, complete with ducks, geese and light-up palm trees, sprawls across the restaurant’s front. Patrons can walk the adjacent pier, feed the catfish and koi, or watch as the staff bags the purged crawfish.

BYOB. For those who like to get saucy, JuJu’s offers three dipping options: red sauce (ketchup and spices), pink sauce (ketchup, mayo and spices) and melted butter.

GALVESTON
BENNO’S ON THE BEACH
On the island’s far east end, Benno’s serves fresh Cajun seafood on an outdoor patio with unencumbered postcard views of the Gulf of Mexico. Sea gulls and pelicans soar on the briny breeze while diners enjoy crawfish, shrimp po’boys, grilled oysters and deep-fried Cajun crabs.

GROVES
LARRY’S FRENCH MARKET & CAJUN RESTAURANT
There’s nothing like Cajun food and live Cajun music to spice up an evening in the Golden Triangle—an area known for its Cajun influence and anchored by Beaumont, Port Arthur and Orange. Tables covered by checkered cloth define the front half of Larry’s. Walls are clad with vintage photos of local fishermen and mounted trophy fish. The restaurant’s back half enshrines a dance floor featuring live music under a neon glow. Reserve a table on the dance floor and order crawfish in season or step up to the year-round Cajun seafood buffet groaning with fried seafood, frog legs, boudin, étouffée and barbecued crab.

PORT ARANSAS
THE BOILING POT
Strings of colored lights, neon beer logos and loads of kitsch create a partylike setting in this lively establishment celebrating 35 years. Every surface, from the corrugated steel exterior to the inside walls and ceilings, is adorned with graffiti, art and caricatures. Hungry diners don white plastic bibs, smash open crab legs with wooden mallets and polish off loads of Cajun seafood, family-style. It has a sizable beer cooler offering more selections than typical seafood joints. One block from the beach, the fishing pier and marina are also within walking distance.

SANTA FE
POOK’S CRAWFISH HOLE
In addition to boiled crawfish, this BYOB shack, about 20 miles west of Galveston, offers deep-fried boudin balls, crawfish pie and gumbo. Expect Pook’s to be packed with patrons at wooden octagonal tables peeling crawfish or cracking open huge snow crab legs while listening to live music.

FANNETT
JUJU’S CAJUN CRAWFISH SHAK
JuJu’s does one thing and does it right. Along a pastoral stretch of FM 365, 15 miles southwest of Beaumont, JuJu’s serves boiled crawfish, corn, potatoes and sausage. Ambiance of the modest red building is defined by exposed plywood walls and a blackboard menu. And it’s of boiled crab legs, crawfish, shrimp, corn, potatoes and sausage. It’s also known for gumbo, shrimp Creole and fresh sourdough bread.

ROCKPORT
CRAZY CAJUN
This no-frills hot spot for Cajun cuisine has been a favorite among locals and tourists since 1987. Stepping inside the unassuming teal and pink hut reveals a boisterous atmosphere as patrons enjoy heaping mounds of steaming seafood on white butcher-papered tables. The menu is mostly à la carte but features the Hungry Cajun—a spicy sampler
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Radley calls his operation Pinchers Crawfish Farm, and on one sunny afternoon, he readied his flat-bottomed aluminum boat for harvesting mudbugs. He navigated the specially designed craft through the muddy water with help from a hydraulic, cleat-studded wheel that pushed along the slushy bottom.

Radley hoisted each pyramid-shaped, crawfish-filled trap from the water and emptied the catch into a sorting area in front of his cockpit. As he went, he rebaited each trap with commercial crawfish pellets and put it back into the water to capture more.

As he sorted and cleaned his harvest, Radley removed debris and tossed the smaller mudbugs back so they could grow larger. With a full load, he motored back to his nearby seafood restaurant, Pinchers Boil’n Pot. The crawfish are submerged in fresh water for 24 hours to purge them of internal impurities. After that, they get weighed and are ready for their starring role in the restaurant.

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Writer and photographer Eric W. Pohl, a member of Pedernales EC, lives in Dripping Springs.
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MESSAGE FROM CEO MARK ROLLANS

IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN: the time when we see Cooperative Principle No. 2: Democratic Member Control in action at district nominating meetings around our service area.

Per our bylaws, nominating meetings are held annually. They are designed to take care of important business: nominating members who want to run for one of the open board seats in the fall board election. Medina EC is owned—and governed—by every member that gets a bill from us each month. Since the board of directors ultimately determine the direction of the cooperative through their votes and input, it’s important that all cooperative members are involved in the nomination process. Directors do, after all, represent you and your interests. Each year, one seat on the board is open in each of the cooperative’s three voting districts.

If you’re interested in serving on the board of directors, these nominating meetings are a great opportunity to visit with current board members and staff to understand the time requirements of board membership. The meetings are also your opportunity to be nominated for one of the candidate positions. You can nominate yourself or ask another member to nominate you for the position.

If you can’t make the meeting, you can get on the ballot through the petition process, which involves gathering 30 signatures from members located in your voting district. Learn more about that process and download a petition form at MedinaEC.org/Nominee.

Whether you are interested in running for a board position, want a chance at winning the $50 prize at the meeting or if you just want to meet some of the cooperative staff and myself, make plans to spend about 30 minutes and come visit with us.

Sincerely,
Mark Rollans

DISTRICT NOMINATING MEETINGS

VOTING DISTRICT 1: Wednesday, February 19, 5:30 p.m. | Medina EC corporate office, 2308 18th St., Hondo
Counties in VD1: Medina

VOTING DISTRICT 2: Tuesday, February 18, 5:30 p.m. | Medina EC Dilley office, 1718 W. FM 117, Dilley
Counties in VD2: Atascosa, Edwards, Frio, Kinney, Real, Uvalde and Zavala

VOTING DISTRICT 3: Monday, February 17, 5:30 p.m. | Medina EC Rio Grande City office, 601 N. FM 3167, Rio Grande City
Counties in VD3: Brooks, Dimmit, Duval, Jim Hogg, La Salle, McMullen, Starr, Webb and Zapata

ATTEND YOUR DISTRICT NOMINATING MEETING FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A CASH PRIZE! AT EACH MEETING, WE WILL AWARD ONE $50 PRIZE.

MORE INFO: MEDINAEC.ORG/NOMMTG
Medina Electric Cooperative

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Medina Electric Cooperative

MEDINA ELECTRIC CELEBRATES THE WORK ANNIVERSARIES of its employees in five-year increments, also known as Service Awards. The cooperative donates $100 for each employee to an organization of their choice, giving a total of $2,000 last year to various community organizations.

Please join us in celebrating these Medina EC employees, who received service awards between October and December 2019.

Jackie Muennink
Communications Specialist
General office
5 years
Donation to
Hondo Lions Club

Albert Vela
Construction Foreman
Bruni office
15 years
Donation to
Bruni Lions Club

Armando Castillo
Working Foreman
Bruni office
15 years
Donation to
Operation Round Up

Greg Zapata
Facilities Coordinator
General office
5 years
Donation to
Painless Butterfly Project

Joel Gonzales
Engineering Equipment Supervisor
General office
15 years
Donation to
Hondo Food Pantry

Chris Muennink
Journeyman
Hondo office
15 years
Donation to
Operation Round Up
Solar Installations Available

**MEDINA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE** we are offering solar arrays and installations for members. This is a project that cooperative staff spent a long time researching, and we are excited to be able to offer this new service.

Through Solar by Medina EC, members can purchase a 5-kilowatt, ground-mounted solar photovoltaic system with installation for $15,000 plus tax. There can be additional installation charges, but those will be determined by cooperative staff during the free site visit. Members will be informed of any additional costs before they make a purchasing decision. Full payment is due before materials can be ordered.

All construction and installation will be done by Medina EC staff or an approved contractor. Medina EC’s licensed staff electrician will perform the final inspection and connect the system to the location and grid.

**PRODUCTION**
The amount of energy produced by a 5-kW system varies based on the time of the year and hours of sunlight. A good rule of thumb when looking at all solar PV systems is that for every kW of capacity, the system should produce about 125 kilowatt-hours per month. Using those figures, a 5-kW system should produce about 625 kWh per month.

**SELLING POWER BACK**
With all distributed generation systems, whether they are purchased from Medina EC or another vendor, the cooperative will purchase electricity generated in excess of electricity consumed at an avoided cost rate.

The avoided cost rate is the cost the cooperative would have incurred had it been required to purchase the energy from a wholesale power supplier. It varies each month and is based on the prior 12 months’ total wholesale power purchase cost, excluding some fees.

The cooperative does not allow banking, or storing, of electricity. That means that you cannot save excess power to offset use later in the same day or billing period; if it is not consumed, electricity is purchased at the avoided cost rate when it is generated.

Because of that, savings will vary depending on when you are producing and using power. A 5-kW system would equate to about $62.50 in savings each month if you are producing the energy at the same time you are using it, but those savings would be lower if you are putting power back on the grid and selling it at the avoided cost rate.

If you have been considering a solar PV system, there are various resources to determine if it is the right purchase for you. Do your homework, and research what you are told by salespeople. Even if you are looking at another vendor and don’t intend to purchase a system from Medina EC, our staff is happy to answer questions to help you.

More information on Solar by Medina EC: MedinaEC.org/Solar

More information for installing any distributed generation system: MedinaEC.org/DG

Contact us: 1-866-MEC-ELEC (632-3532) | MyCoop@MedinaEC.org

*Technical support will not be available outside of normal business hours. Encountering technical issues turning in the application on the last day will not be grounds for an extension."
HOW CAN WE CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Community Empowerment Grants Now Available

What You Need To Know

This year, up to $5,500 will be awarded. The application deadline is 5 p.m. April 1.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:
- Encourage economic diversity.
- Contribute to community health and development.
- Improve the quality or quantity of services essential for the development of viable communities.

Counties Where Grants Can Be Awarded

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View eligibility information and apply online at MedinaEC.org/Grant.

In 2019, the Children’s Advocacy Center of Laredo received $1,850 for updates to their air conditioning system. You can read about the important work the center does at CACLaredo.org. Since the Community Empowerment Program began in 2015, nearly $57,000 has been put back into area communities through the program.

February is Food Pantry Month

Help Us Fill the Bucket Truck!

Drop off canned goods or other nonperishable food items at any of our offices during February. We will take them, along with a co-op donation, to a local food pantry.

Every member who donates items will be entered into a drawing for a $20 bill credit.

We’re collecting items until Monday, March 2.
LAUNDRY ISN’T A TASK THAT MANY PEOPLE RELISH. But if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

**Opt for cold water.** Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers, and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.

**Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders**, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine’s manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.

**Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time.**

**Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.**

**Clean the dryer’s lint screen before every load.** This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.

**Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow,** which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.

**Clean the dryer’s moisture sensors.** Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner’s manual for instructions on how to clean them.

**Dry similar items together.** Don’t mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.

**Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying.** If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids overdrying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.

**And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors.** This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer—a savings in itself.

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**Lighten Your Laundry Load**

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**We Want Your Feedback**

**STARTING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 3,** 350 members will be randomly selected to get a call or email to answer some survey questions about Medina Electric. Your answers will help the cooperative to see how we can improve service to and better communicate with our members.

The survey, email or phone call, should take less than 5 minutes. This feedback is important to the cooperative and we appreciate members taking time out of their busy schedules to provide it to us.

The surveys are being done by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Phone calls will either come from an 844 or 507 area code. Emails will show Medina Electric in the “From” line.

Throughout the year, the cooperative will be doing these surveys quarterly, so additional surveys will take place in May, August and November.

If you do not get a phone call or email to do a survey but would like to share feedback or an idea with the cooperative, email us at MyCoop@MedinaEC.org.
WHAT’S ON THAT POLE?

This illustration shows the basic equipment found on electric utility poles. The equipment varies according to the location and the service they provide.

**PRIMARY WIRES**
Primary wires carry 7,200 volts of electricity from a substation. That voltage is 60 times higher than the voltage that runs through your home’s electrical outlets!

**SURGE ARRESTORS**
These protect the transformer from lightning strikes.

**NEUTRAL WIRE**
The neutral wire acts as a line back to the substation and is tied to the ground, balancing the electricity on the system.

**SECONDARY SERVICE DROP**
Carries 120/240 volts of electricity to consumers’ homes. It has two “hot” wires from the transformer and a bare “neutral” wire that’s connected to the ground wire on the pole.

**GROUND WIRE**
The ground wire connects to the neutral wire to complete the circuit inside the transformer. It also directs electricity from lightning safely into the earth.

**TELEPHONE, CABLE TV AND FIBER WIRES**
These are typically the lowest wires on the pole.

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NEVER NAIL POSTERS OR OTHER ITEMS TO UTILITY POLES. THESE CREATE A SAFETY HAZARD FOR LINEMEN.
It pays to be a member of Medina Electric Cooperative. At their November meeting, the board of directors voted to return $1.85 million in capital credits to members of the cooperative.

We are a not-for-profit organization. Any revenue above the cost of doing business is considered “margins.” These margins represent an interest-free loan to the cooperative. This capital loan of operating capital by the membership to the cooperative allows us to finance operating costs and expenses, with the intent that excess capital will be repaid to the members in later years through capital credits. Capital credits are an important part of our business model and are just one of the things that makes the cooperative different than many other utilities. Learn more at www.MedinaEC.org/CapitalCredits.
These are just a few of the November and December highlights from Medina EC’s social media pages. Join Medina EC in the community appreciation and fun by commenting, liking and sharing with us today!
Pain and Aging?

STABBING FOOT PAIN?
Do you suffer from burning, tingling, or stabbing foot pain? You should know help is available. 20 million Americans suffer from these symptoms and put up with the pain, because they are not aware of this proven treatment.

MagniLife® Pain Relieving Foot Cream contains Gnaophali-um to relieve pain, while natural moisturizers restore cracked, damaged, and itchy skin. “It’s the ONLY product that helps relieve the burning, and tingling feeling in my feet!” - Mable NY.

MagniLife® Pain Relieving Foot Cream is available at Walgreens, CVS/pharmacy, Rite Aid, Target, Walmart and Amazon, located in the footcare and diabetes sections. Order risk free for $19.99 +$5.95 S&H for a 4 oz jar. Get a FREE jar when you order two for $39.98 +$5.95 S&H. Send payment to: MagniLife F-TC2, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call 1-800-428-1890. Satisfaction guaranteed. Order now at www.MagniLife.com

LEG CRAMPS AT NIGHT?
If painful muscle cramps in your legs, back, feet or hips are interrupting your sleep, you should know relief is available. Over 100 million people suffer from unnecessary muscle cramps because they are not aware of this proven treatment to relieve and prevent symptoms.

MagniLife® Muscle Cramp Pain Reliever contains eight active ingredients, such as Magnesia Phosphorica to help prevent and relieve cramps and radiating pains that are worse at night. “Your product has severely helped me and I thank you so very much.” - Marie L., MT.

MagniLife® Muscle Cramp Pain Reliever is available at Rite Aid, CVS and Amazon. Order risk free for $19.99 +$5.95 S&H for 125 tablets per bottle. Receive a FREE bottle when you order two for $39.98 +$5.95 S&H. Send payment to: MagniLife L-TC2, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call 1-800-428-1890. Satisfaction guaranteed. Order now at www.LegCrampsRelief.com

FIBROMYALGIA PAIN?
Are you one of 16 million people suffering from deep muscle pain and tenderness, joint stiffness, difficulty sleeping, or the feeling of little or no energy?

You should know relief is available. MagniLife® Pain & Fatigue Relief combines 11 active ingredients to relieve deep muscle pain and soreness, arthritis pain, aching joints, and back and neck pain. Although this product is not intended to treat fibromyalgia, it can help with the pain and fatigue caused by fibromyalgia. “These tablets have just been WONDERFUL. I’d recommend them to anyone and everyone!” - Debra, WV.

MagniLife® Pain & Fatigue Relief is sold at CVS/pharmacy, Rite Aid Pharmacy and Amazon. Order risk free for $19.99 +$5.95 S&H for 125 tablets per bottle. Get a FREE bottle when you order two for $39.98 +$5.95 S&H. Send payment to: MagniLife F-TC2, PO Box 6789, McKinney, TX 75071 or call 1-800-428-1890. Satisfaction guaranteed. Order now at www.PainFatigue.com
**(Weeds, wildflowers, and other vegetation removal)**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 6**

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**GROWTH CONTROL HUB**

1200 West Loop 360, Bldg. 8

**FARM TO TABLE DINNER**

Gabriel's, 501 S. Congress Ave.

**TEXAS GARDEN FESTIVAL**

Barton Springs Pool, 6701 S. Lamar Blvd.

**TEXAS GARDEN C.COMMUNITY GARDEN**

1001 S. Lamar Blvd.

**TEXAS GARDEN T.GIVE AWAY**

Barton Springs Pool, 6701 S. Lamar Blvd.

**TEXAS GARDEN ENSN@R EXPERIENCE**

400 East 4th St.

**TEXAS GARDEN ENSN@R EXHIBITION**

400 East 4th St.

**TEXAS GARDEN GIVE AWAY**

1200 West Loop 360, Bldg. 8

**TEXAS GARDEN GIVE AWAY**

Gabriel's, 501 S. Congress Ave.

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400 East 4th St.

**TEXAS GARDEN GIVE AWAY**

400 East 4th St.
More and more Americans are reaching the age where mobility is an everyday concern. Whether from an injury or from the aches and pains that come from getting older—getting around isn’t as easy as it used to be. You may have tried a power chair or a scooter. The Zinger is NOT a power chair or a scooter! The Zinger is quick and nimble, yet it is not prone to tipping like many scooters. Best of all, it weighs only 47.2 pounds and folds and unfolds with ease. You can take it almost anywhere, providing you with independence and freedom.

Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a personal electric vehicle that’s truly unique. They created a battery that provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. The Zinger features two steering levers, one on either side of the seat. The user pushes both levers down to go forward, pulls them both up to brake, and pushes one while pulling the other to turn to either side. This enables great mobility, the ability to turn on a dime and to pull right up to tables or desks. The controls are right on the steering lever so it’s simple to operate, and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the Zinger is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What’s more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk—you can even gate-check it at the airport like a stroller. Think about it, you can take your Zinger almost anywhere, so you don’t have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 275 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 miles on a single charge.

Why spend another day letting mobility issues hamper your independence and quality of life?

**Zinger Chair®**
**Call now and receive a utility basket absolutely FREE with your order.**
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Please mention code 112594 when ordering.

*Just think of the places you can go:* • Shopping • Air Travel • Bus Tours
• Restaurants—ride right up to the table! • Around town or just around your house

The Zinger Chair is a personal electric vehicle and is not a medical device nor a wheelchair. Zinger is not intended for medical purposes to provide mobility to persons restricted to a sitting position. It is not covered by Medicare nor Medicaid. © 2020 firstSTREET for Boomers and Beyond, Inc.
On an overheated Saturday in early October, I drove Roy Perez, the venerable pitmaster at Kreuz Market in Lockhart, and Kreuz Market owner Keith Schmidt to Snow’s BBQ in Lexington. Snow’s, a tiny barbecue joint in a tiny town, is often mentioned as one of the best barbecue destinations in the state. Of course, Kreuz Market vies for the same title and has been a legendary barbecue purveyor for more than a century.

Roy is the first pitmaster I photographed nearly 25 years ago. Since then, as I created images for two photography books on Texas barbecue, I’ve had the honor to make more pictures of Roy along with photographs of dozens more folks who do the hot, hard work of making Texas barbecue the best in the world.

Even though Roy remains one of my favorite subjects, I will admit that in the past six years, a rival for my lens’s attention has charmed me through several sessions. She is a grand woman named Tootsie Tomanetz, who handles much of the cooking in the early hours of every Saturday in Lexington. Now in her 80s, Tootsie’s fame rivals that of Roy. But neither one lets the acclaim go to their head.

Tootsie arrives at Snow’s well before sunup each Saturday and works through lunchtime, exhibiting her natural work ethic as well as a genuine love of people and the pit skills she has honed over decades.

I had set the goal to deliver Roy to Snow’s for lunch, so he could meet his fellow barbecue icon, Miss Tootsie. Roy is not widely traveled but agreed to go along.

Once Roy, Keith and I arrived in Lexington, we were greeted by Snow’s owner, Kerry Bexley. We enjoyed a brilliant sampling of Snow’s smoked goodies.

After lunch, we took a few minutes to capture this image of two barbecue legends who will live forever in the barbecue museum that exists only in my mind.

WEB EXTRAS
▶ Win a copy of Wyatt McSpadden’s photography book Texas BBQ. Go to TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

STORY AND PHOTO BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

Meat and Greet
Two of Texas’ legendary pitmasters meet for the first time

Wyatt McSpadden’s two photography books on Texas barbecue are Texas BBQ and Texas BBQ: Small Town to Downtown.
How can a rechargeable hearing aid that costs only $299.99 be every bit as good as one that sells for $2,400 or more?

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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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Proudly assembled in America!
I moved to Texas 14 years ago and was surprised at first by the amount of fresh, local produce available. Eager to expand my cooking horizons, I embraced all of it in my cooking. On my recipe blog, Stetted, I look to everything that Texas has to offer each season, from summer peaches to winter citrus.

When it comes to desserts, my family gravitates toward anything with fruit—my kids are especially fond of strawberry shortcake any time of year. But when strawberries aren’t in season, I look to other ingredients.

Meyer lemons are perfect for celebratory desserts because they are sweeter and less acidic than standard lemons. This Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie is suitable for all tastes, including the littlest valentines in your house. Gingersnaps are used in the crust for a contrasting kick, but you can swap in graham crackers.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Meyer Lemon Meringue Pie

1¾ cups crushed gingersnap cookies
¼ cup (½ stick) melted butter
1⅓ cups plus ¼ cup sugar, divided use
2 tablespoons flour
3 tablespoons cornstarch
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup water
½ cup Meyer lemon juice
4 eggs, separated

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix together gingersnaps, melted butter and ¼ cup sugar until well combined. Press mixture into a 9-inch pie dish, using the bottom of a measuring cup or glass to press down, making sure to keep the crust even. Bake crust 10 minutes, then set aside.
3. In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine sugar, flour, cornstarch and salt. Gradually add water and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook for 2 minutes or until thickened. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice. Slowly beat in egg yolks. Place egg whites in a small bowl and beat until stiff. Fold ⅓ of the egg whites into the lemon mixture. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites. Pour into crust. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Cool completely before serving.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32
Heat, whisk together 1 cup sugar, flour, cornstarch, salt, water and lemon juice, and cook until dissolved.

4. Beat egg yolks in a small bowl, then slowly whisk in ¼ cup of the warm sugar mixture. Once combined, slowly whisk egg mixture into the saucepan.

5. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook about 5 minutes, whisking constantly, until mixture is thick and coats the back of a spoon. Pour filling into prepared crust.

6. In the bowl of a stand mixer, beat egg whites until frothy. Turn mixer to high and pour in remaining ⅓ cup of sugar. Beat until stiff peaks form.

7. Spoon meringue onto pie filling, spreading to the edges of the crust to prevent shrinkage. Return the pie to the oven and bake 10–15 minutes, until meringue is lightly browned. Let cool completely before serving.

Serves 8.

COOK’S TIP
Meringue pie is best served as soon as it has cooled but can be stored in the refrigerator. Meringue may release moisture (weep) after being exposed to humidity.

Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com.

Oma’s Dreamy Coconut Pie

1 9-inch pie crust, premade or homemade
2 cups sweetened coconut flakes, divided use
1½ cups coconut milk (not low-fat)
1½ cups half-and-half
5 egg yolks
¾ cup sugar
4 tablespoons cornstarch
¼ teaspoon salt
1¼ cup (¼ stick) butter
2 teaspoons coconut extract
2 cups heavy whipping cream
¼ cup powdered sugar

1. Prebake pie crust and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Spread ½ cup coconut flakes evenly on a baking sheet. Place sheet in oven 8–10 minutes or until coconut begins to toast. Remove from oven to cool and set aside.

3. Pour coconut milk and half-and-half into a medium-size bowl. Add egg yolks and whisk together. Set aside.

4. Combine sugar, cornstarch and salt in a medium-size saucepan. Whisk egg mixture into pan and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the custard thickens and boils, about 15 minutes. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in remaining untoasted coconut flakes, butter, vanilla and 1 teaspoon coconut extract.

5. Pour filling into pie crust and refrigerate until cool.


Serves 8.

COOK’S TIP
A graham cracker pie crust works well, too.

Pecan Pie Muffins

1 cup chopped pecans
1 cup brown sugar
½ cup flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a medium-size bowl, stir together pecans, brown sugar, flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Add melted butter, eggs and vanilla to bowl and stir to mix well.
3. Spoon batter into a foil-lined muffin pan. (Batter will stick to regular paper muffin cups.) Fill each cup about ¾ full. Bake 20–25 minutes. Makes 12 muffins.

COOK’S TIP
These will not rise much and the finished product will be flat on top.
**Valentine Stack**

**MARION EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC**

**FILLING**

1. **FILLING:** Add the mascarpone, cream cheese and vanilla into a medium-size glass mixing bowl. Beat with a hand mixer on medium speed until soft and creamy, about 1–2 minutes.

2. Into a small, microwave-safe bowl, add the 2 tablespoons whipping cream and microwave on high 25 seconds. Add the white chocolate and stir until creamy. If necessary, microwave an additional 15–20 seconds to melt chocolate. Immediately add to the cream cheese mixture and beat on medium speed until incorporated, 15–20 seconds.

3. Add the powdered sugar and remaining cup of whipping cream and continue beating an additional 1–2 minutes until mixture is thick and creamy. Do not beat on high or overmix—the mascarpone can separate. Gently fold in 1½ cups raspberries and set aside.

**PANCAKES**

4. **PANCAKES:** In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and eggs. Pour the milk, ¼ cup vegetable oil and vanilla, and whisk to combine. Pour over dry ingredients and, using a large spoon, stir briefly to just incorporate. There will be lumps of dry ingredients. Set aside 10 minutes.

5. If using a griddle to prepare pancakes, preheat it to 350 degrees. Gently stir pancake batter just until combined. Pour 1 tablespoon oil onto griddle or into nonstick pan over medium-high heat and spread it evenly, then pour ½-cup portions of the batter onto the griddle or pan and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes on each side. Remove pancakes onto a large platter and cover with foil to keep warm.

6. To serve, place one pancake onto a serving platter and spread it with ⅓–½ cup of the filling. Place another pancake on top and continue layering the filling and pancakes until you’ve used up the pancakes. Top with remaining filling and garnish with remaining raspberries. Serve immediately.

Serves 4–6.

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**Texas Co-op Power**

**NEXT MONTH**

**SOUl MUSIC OF SOUTH TEXAS**

Conjunto, built upon a polka rhythm, coaxes a unique sound and subculture from accordions and 12-string guitars.

**SHARPENING MY HISTORY**

Chet Garner pokes around the Devil’s Rope Museum in McLean.

Look for additional content online TexasCoopPower.com

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Our products have been made in Texas since 2006. We customize, so why pay for something you don’t want? Get exactly what you want at an affordable price. So stop struggling and start enjoying your bath again. Call us for an in-home no-pressure presentation. What do you have to lose?

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**Measure Calf Circumference**

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Power

We know the power of a good country song, and rocker Huey Lewis knows the power of love—but we wondered how power moves Texans. Here are some of the ways. **GRACE FULTZ**

**WEB EXTRAS** ► See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

► **DANNY PICKENS**, Cherokee County EC: “A Ferris wheel at the East Texas Fair is powered up for fun.”

► **LAUREN MCCLAIN**, PenTex Energy: “Abigail McClain, 6, shows Mom how a pushup is done.”

► **JACQUELINE ACUFF**, Nueces EC: “Lightning shows the power of nature right in my backyard.”

► **MARK HUSFELD**, Navasota Valley EC: Near a substation in Navasota after a thunderstorm.

**UPCOMING CONTESTS**

| JUNE | STATE PARKS | DUE FEBRUARY 10 |
| JUNE | EXPLORATION | DUE MARCH 10 |
| JUNE | ON THE WATER | DUE APRIL 10 |

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.
Pick of the Month

Michael Carbonaro Magic Show

Victoria February 15
(361) 788-9271, visdfoundation.org

Michael Carbonaro is known for his hidden-camera magic. His illusions, along with his absurd, matter-of-fact explanations, leave audiences bewildered. Proceeds from this show support the Victoria Independent School District.

February

7
Alpine [7–9, 14–16] Nat Turner in Jerusalem.
(432) 837-8218, sulross.edu/theatre

(872) 216-9463, texaswinetrail.com

8
Avoca Swedish Smorgasbord.
(325) 668-2796

Lufkin The Choir of Man.
(936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

9
Bandera St. Stanislaus Church Faith Heritage Dinner.
(830) 460-4712, ststanislausbandera.com

14
(830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

(361) 575-2665, stsrda.org

15
Fredericksburg Cave Creek School Open House.
(830) 990-1017, historicshools.org

Richardson Mu Delta Alpha Changemaker Award Dinner.
(469) 712-7716, mudeltaalpha.org/events

Around Texas

ALTHEA CONRADO
knits more than 3,000 hours annually to make blankets for hospice patients.
POWER OF OUR PEOPLE | JANUARY 2020

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Nominate someone today!

Tell us about somebody who improves the quality of life in your community. Email your nomination to people@texascooppower.com. Include the person’s name, co-op affiliation and a short description of his or her work in the community. Featured nominees will receive a $100 donation for their cause.

Around Texas Event Listings

PLAN YOUR TRIP TODAY AT TexasCoopPower.com
Submit Your Event!

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for April by February 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

Yours FREE!
Elvis ’68 Comeback Special Tribute Coin

Get your uncirculated US Half-Dollar enhanced by Mystic to showcase Elvis – performing in his ’68 Comeback Special – for FREE. You send just $2.95 for shipping and guaranteed delivery. It’s a great value!

A portrait of Elvis in black leather is permanently bonded to a shining Half-Dollar for years of collecting fun and memories. It’s a neat tribute to this American music legend.

The 1968 television show Elvis – often called the ’68 Comeback Special – marked Elvis’ return to live performances for his fans and a reminder to the world that he was still the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll. Informal “jam” sessions mingled with spectacular sets to create a show that thrilled the audience – both live and on television. The result was a smash hit – the highest-rated show of the year.

Get your Elvis tribute coin for FREE – you send only $2.95 for shipping and guaranteed delivery! Reply today and you’ll also receive special collector’s information and other interesting coins on approval.

Elvis ’68 Comeback Special Coin

[Yes! Send me the FREE Elvis Presley coin. Enclosed is $2.95 for shipping and guaranteed delivery. Satisfaction guaranteed. Limit one coin.]

Quick order at MysticAd.com/DQ186
Whether it’s hats, trucks or hair, we Texans expect things to be big. So when I saw a building in Wichita Falls advertised as the world’s littlest skyscraper, it piqued my interest in a Texas-sized way.

I was amazed at the revitalization in downtown Wichita Falls, which includes a craft brewery, a farmers market and a fancy chocolatier. At the northern edge of downtown, I found my destination: the Newby-McMahon Building.

From the street, the building looked like a well-kept, historic single-story structure. A glance down the alley identified the addition of a thin, four-story tower—like an elevator shaft built for floors never completed. The tower looks strange, but the story of its origin is even stranger.

To unravel the mystery, I walked into the building that now houses Hello Again, a consignment shop whose owner encourages visitors to climb the world’s littlest skyscraper. I found the thin staircase with a sign directing me upward. Even though I felt like I had stepped into a large closet, I was actually inside the skyscraper. It measures only 9 feet by 12 feet. I climbed three flights of stairs and arrived at the top floor museum that recounts an epic tale of swindling, greed and manipulation.

The story began in 1918, when the oil boom hit nearby Burk Burnett. The town was rocking by overnight success, but most of the deals took shape in Wichita Falls, which was desperate for office space. J.D. McMahon proposed a solution that included what he described as the business opportunity of a lifetime. McMahon pitched the city’s residents on a skyscraper that would be 480 feet high—the tallest in Texas and rivaling the tallest in the world. Investors were eager, and McMahon raised $200,000 (well over $3 million in today’s money).

Construction started and questions soon followed. The building was not as “Texas-sized” as promised. Instead of the monumental structure the investors expected, they received a skinny tower with no elevator or stairs. The investors were enraged and sued McMahon for fraud. When the judge reviewed the approved blueprints, he found that everything was in order and that the building was being built exactly according to plan. The final plan was laid out and approved—in inches instead of feet. So, instead of getting the 480-foot skyscraper investors had dreamed of, builders erected a 480-inch embarrassment. McMahon had executed the con of the century by simply adding an apostrophe. Turns out that when people see dollar signs, they tend to overlook punctuation.

The angry investors wanted to tear the building down immediately, but before the demolition took place, a nationally syndicated newspaper column called Ripley’s Believe It or Not dubbed the ill-conceived project the world’s littlest skyscraper. That publicity quickly transformed the eyesore into an international tourist attraction.

I stood at the top of the diminutive structure that now sits in the shadow of taller buildings and wondered how this skyscraper, if it had been built to expectations, might have changed the trajectory of Wichita Falls. Would it now sit abandoned? Or would Wichita Falls have become a city more like Dallas? The world will never know. But what is certain is how much fun it is to climb the world’s littlest skyscraper and take in one of the littlest views in Texas.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of The Daytripper on PBS.
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